

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-6 (Cancelled)

7. (Currently amended) A method for preparing a preserved food product, said method comprising (1) contacting a food product selected from the group consisting of vegetables, beans, meat, potato, rice, pasta, and mixtures thereof with an amount of electrodialed composition effective for obtaining an acidified food product, wherein the electrodialed composition has a total cation concentration of 1.0N or less, an individual cation concentration of 0.6N or less, a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less, and a pH of 4.5 or less wherein the amount of electrodialyzed composition is sufficient to achieve a pH of 4.6 or less in the final food product; (2) placing the acidified food product in a heat-stable, sealable container; (3) sealing the container; (4) thermally treating the food product in the sealed container at a temperature and for a time effective to pasteurize the food product; (5) cooling the thermally treated food product to reduce the temperature to about 25°C or less to obtain the preserved food product.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Original) The method as defined in claim 7, wherein the container is a plastic pouch.

10. (Cancelled)

11. (Currently amended) The method of claim 7 [[10]], wherein the electrodialyzed composition has a total cation concentration of 0.1N or less, an individual cation concentration of 0.04N or less, a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less and a pH of 3.5 or less.

12. (Currently amended) The method of claim 7, wherein the food product is contacted with an amount of electrodialyzed composition effective for achieving a pH of 4.2 or less in the final food product.

13. (Currently amended) A method for preparing a preserved food product, said method comprising (1) placing a food product selected from the group consisting of vegetables, beans, meat, potato, rice, pasta, and mixtures thereof in a sealable, heat stable container; (2) adding an amount of electrodialyzed composition to the container, wherein the electrodialyzed composition has a total cation concentration of 1.0N or less, an individual cation concentration of 0.6N or less, a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less, and a pH of 4.5 or less, wherein the amount is sufficient to achieve a pH of 4.6 or less in the final preserved food product; (3) sealing the container; (4) thermally treating the food product in the sealed container at a temperature and for a time effective to pasteurize the food product; (5) cooling the thermally treated food product to rapidly reduce the temperature to 25°C or less to obtain the preserved food product.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13 ~~[[15]]~~, wherein the electrodialed composition has a total cation concentration of 0.1 N or less, an individual cation concentration of 0.04N or less, a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less, and a pH of 3.5 or less.

17. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the amount of electrodialed composition added to the container is effective for achieving a pH of 4.2 or less in the preserved food product.

18. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing preserved vegetables, said method comprising (1) pretreating raw vegetables selected from the group consisting of carrots, peppers, broccoli, peas, pea-pods, cauliflower, onions, tomatoes, mushrooms, zucchini, corn, celery, asparagus, green beans, water chestnuts, bamboo shoots and mixtures thereof ~~in order~~ to reduce an initial microbiological load; (2) placing the pretreated raw vegetables in a sealable, heat stable plastic pouch; (3) adding an amount of electrodialed composition to the container, wherein the electrodialed composition has a total cation concentration of 1.0N or less, an individual cation concentration of 0.6 N or less than 0.6N, a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less, and a pH of 4.5 or less, wherein the amount is sufficient to achieve a pH of 4.6 or less in the preserved vegetables; (4) sealing the container; (5) thermally treating the vegetables in the sealed container at a temperature and for a time effective to pasteurize the vegetables; (6) cooling the thermally treated vegetables to rapidly reduce the temperature to about 25°C or less to obtain the preserved vegetables.

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Cancelled)

21. (Currently amended) The method of claim 18 [[20]], wherein the electrodialed composition has a total cation concentration of 0.1N or less, an individual cation concentration of 0.04N or less, a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less, and a pH of 3.5 or less.

22. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the amount of electrodialed composition added to the container is effective for achieving a pH of 4.2 or less in the preserved vegetables.

23. (Original) A method for acidifying a food product to a final product pH of less than 4.6, the method comprising contacting the food with a countercurrent stream of electrodialed composition having a pH of 4.5 or less and a temperature range of from 1 to 100°C for a total contact time of about 30 seconds or more, the electrodialed composition provided using membrane electrodialysis to provide an electrodialed composition having a total anion or total cation concentration of 1.0N or less, an individual cation or anion concentration of 0.6N or less, and a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less.

24. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the food product is selected from the group consisting of vegetables, beans, meat, potato, rice, pasta, and mixtures thereof.

25. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the electrodialed composition has a total cation concentration of 0.5N or less, an individual cation concentration of 0.3N or less, a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less, and a pH of 4.5 or less.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25, wherein the electrodialyzed composition has a total cation concentration of 0.1N or less, an individual cation concentration of 0.04N or less, a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less, and a pH of 3.5 or less.

27. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the method is effective for acidifying a food product to a final product pH of 4.2 or less.

28. (Original) A method for acidifying a formulated food product, the method comprising including an amount of an electrodialyzed composition in a formulated food product by completely or partially replacing normal water in the formula effective for lowering pH to 4.6 or less, hot-filling the food product into a heat stable container or apply a heat treatment to the filled and sealed container sufficient to pasteurize the food product.

29. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the food product is selected from the group consisting of beverages, desserts, dressings, sauces, gravies, dips, spreads, snacks, pasta and cereal/ baked goods.

30. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the electrodialyzed composition having a total cation concentration of 1.0N or less, an individual cation concentration of 0.6N or less, a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less, and a pH of 4.5 or less.

31. (Original) The method of claim 30, wherein the electrodialyzed composition has a total cation concentration of 0.1N or less, an individual cation concentration of 0.04N or less, a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less, and a pH of 3.5 or less.

32. (Original) The method of claim 28, wherein the amount of electrodialyzed composition in the formulated food product is effective for providing a pH of 4.2 or less.

Claims 33-40 (Cancelled)

41. (Currently amended) A method for preparing preserved pasta using an in-package process, said method comprising (1) combining dry pasta with an electrodialyzed composition having a temperature of about 70°C or greater in a heat stable, heat sealable container, the electrodialyzed composition effective for achieving a final, equilibrium pH of the preserved pasta of 4.6 or less, wherein the dry pasta is combined with the electrodialyzed composition at a ratio of dry pasta to electrodialyzed composition of 0.7 or greater; and wherein the electrodialyzed composition has a total cation concentration of 1.0N or less, an individual cation concentration of 0.6N or less than 0.6N, a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less, and a pH of 4.5 or less; (2) sealing the filled container; (3) thermally treating the sealed container at a temperature of 70°C or greater; (4) mixing for about 2 minutes or more, the mixing effective for providing a uniform distribution of the electrodialyzed composition in the pasta; (4) cooling the thermally treated pasta to reduce the temperature to about 25°C or less to obtain the preserved pasta.

Claims 42-43 (Cancelled)

44. (Original) The method of claim 41, wherein the electrodialyzed composition has a total cation concentration of 0.1N or less, an individual cation concentration of 0.04N or less, a free chlorine content of 1 ppm or less, and a pH of 3.5 or less.

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RESPONSE TO NON-COMPLIANT AMENDMENT dated January 16, 2009

45. (Currently amended) The method of claim 41 ~~[[42]]~~, wherein the electrodialyzed composition is effective for providing a pH of 4.2 or less in the preserved pasta.

46. (Currently amended) The method of claim 41 ~~[[42]]~~, wherein a ratio of dry pasta to electrodialyzed composition is 0.80 or greater.

Claims 47-90. (Cancelled)